

Testimony from Rob Zimmerman

Hi,

I would like to share my story with you. I cannot make it to Lansing since I need to work to pay child support and cannot afford any time off.

My girlfriend and I found out that we were going to be parents.

From day one I supported her and offered all the help I could.

Approximately two months after we found out (and 2 weeks after we found out it was twins!) she left me. The reason being is that I wanted us to stay with my parents for about 6-12 months so I could save up for a home while she wanted to move out into an apartment.

Throughout the pregnancy I offered help at every step of the way. I was able to go to three (3) appointments during the 7 months. The mother kept information to a minimum when I asked about the girls.

I was called when the mother went into labor and was present for the birth. After the birth one of my girls was in the NICU and the other was up with their mother. I spent a lot of time in the NICU since their mother was not well enough to be down there. Once the mother learned that I did not plan to sign the birth certificate (if someone dumps you two months after they find out and have no contact with you, you would do this too) she would not let me see my girls.

Not even visit Emily who was in the NICU.

The next day I filed a complaint with the courts. The mother would not submit to a paternity test so we filed for a court ordered test.

The day before the hearing, she agreed to the test. This had been 2

1/2 months since the girls were born. Once it was determined that I was the father we had another court date to determine child support. It had now been almost 4 months since I had had any real contact with my girls.

During this hearing the court wanted simply to determine child support and nothing else. They took my income information and prorated it for the year. They overestimated my income (40K versus a reality of 33K) and did not ask the mother for her previous years tax returns (she was and still is not working) and told me that if I didn't accept this amount that I would not get any parenting time and would have to wait more to see my girls. Of course, I agreed to the amount in exchange for 8 hours a week with my girls. I also was granted joint legal custody at this time.

We then filed for additional parenting time. We finally got this date when the girls were about 8 months old. The mother argued that I was mentally incapable of having the girls overnight so the judge then ordered that my overnight visits need to be supervised until I pay for a social worker review (2K). I was awarded 3 hours for 3 weeknights and one supervised overnight each weekend pending a social worker review. I was also given 2 weeks in the summer to be taken one day at a time, Father's Day, and my birthday. The holidays and their birthdays are to be shared. Again, I agreed to the terms so I could see my girls more. The judge reasoned that the girls were already established in their mother's home and could not be away from that environment for an extended period of time.

The mother has been less than cooperative with me. She has kept medical information from me. One of my children just finished chemotherapy for a rare blood disease and she kept me away from her first chemo treatment because "You will have to pay for it so you better work" and wouldn't tell me where/when it was. She also didn't tell me that the girls had heart murmurs and other information. The mother has a live-in boyfriend who gets to see my girls more than I can. I guess she can say who has the right to see my kids, not me.

The bottom line is that I have done NOTHING wrong here. I have fought hard just to have my girls know who their dad is and that he loves them (and they do know who daddy is, that is priceless). I plan on going for joint physical custody as soon as I can afford a lawyer again. I owe 2.5K in arrears that I am trying to pay for as well. I live with my parents so I am not wasting my money on anything. I have a good job with a decent wage but still am living day to day, not eating more than one meal a day, and I'm in debt.

How can the government make good fathers (and mothers) go through this. It's about time that things are made fair for parents and their children.

PLEASE call me if you want ANY more information about my case. My girls are over (taking a nap) so I need to go check on them.

Thank you for what you are doing.

Rob Zimmerman
Loving Father of Anna and Emily
734-320-1959
www.letdadsbedads.org